

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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SUBJECT: FURTHER ISRAELI REACTION TO LEBANON INCURSION

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1. SUMMARY: OUR INITIAL INQUIRIES AMONG POLITICAL FIGURES, JOURNAL-
ISTS AND ACADEMICS REGARDING THEIR REACTION TO THE ISRAELI MOVE INTO
LEBANON LEAD US TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT OF THE ISRAELI
REACTION: THERE IS WIDESPREAD, ALMOST UNIVERSAL, SUPPORT FOR THE
GOVERNMENT IN THIS MOVE; THE ACTION HAS STRENGTHENED THE GOVERNMENT;
AND THERE IS A FEELING THAT THE ACTION WILL NOT AND SHOULD NOT
DISRUPT PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE. END SUMMARY.

2. SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT. THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT HOW
ISRAELIS FEEL REGARDING THE MILITARY OPERATION IN LEBANON--
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THEY SUPPORT IT WHOLEHEARTEDLY. AT THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL PARTIES
AND INSTITUTIONS, ALL THE KNESSET--"FROM SHELLI TO GEULA COHEN"
-- SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT, AS DMC MK AKIVA NOF PUT TO US TODAY.
THE LABOR PARTY HAS EXPRESSED ITS FULL SUPPORT, AS STATED BY
FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON. AT THE MORE PERSONAL LEVEL,
ISRAELIS ARE INDIVIDUALLY PLEASED AND RELIEVED. MOSHE MEISELS
OF MAARIV TOLD US THAT, IN HIS VIEW, GOING INTO LEBANON WAS

"AN EMOTIONAL NECESSITY AFTER SATURDAY." FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH ISRAELIS EVEN BEFORE THE ACTION, WE ARE AWARE MANY IDF PERSONNEL VIEWED THE ANTICIPATED ACTION AS A REPRISAL WHICH HAD TO COME.

3. A STRONGER GOVERNMENT. PARTLY AS A RESULT OF THIS SUPPORT, THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IS NOW STRONGER THAN IT WAS A WEEK AGO. ISRAELIS HAVE RALLEID ROUND THEIR LEADERS IN A TIME OF CRISIS AND TRAGEDY. IN ADDITION, BEGIN IS SEEN IN A MORE FAVORABLE LIGHT. AS ONE MK REMARKED, "THIS IS A SITUATION READY-MADE FOR BEGIN; HE IS IN HIS ELEMENT." THE SOLIDARITY OF THE CABINET HAS BEEN ENHANCED COMPETITION BETWEEN WEIZMAN, SHARON AND DAYAN HAS FADED FROM CONSIDERATION AND NO TALK IS HEARD OF POSSIBLE CHANGES IN MINISTERS. HOWEVER, THIS HIGH ATTENTION GIVEN IT FADES SOMEWHAT, BEGIN'S PROBLEMS WILL STILL BE THERE-- AND WILL STILL BE UNSOLVED.

4. NO DAMAGE TO NEGOTIATIONS? THERE IS A WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT THE LEBANON ACTION IS A NECESSARY STEP TO ENSURE ISRAELI SECURITY AND IT WILL BE UNDERSTOOD AS SUCH BY ALL CONCERNED. ISRAELI CITIZENS AGREE WITH THEIR PRIME MINISTER THAT IF EGYPT REALLY WANTS PEACE, IT WILL NOT SEE THE LEBANON OPERATION AS AN IMPEDIMENT. LIBERAL MK SHARIR SAID LAST NIGHT THAT "EGYPT WILL UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE DOING THEIR WORK FOR THEM IN CLEANING UP THE PLO, ALTHOUGH THEY WILL MAKE A FEW PRO FORMA STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD." ANOTHER OBSERVER WENT FURTHER AND SAID THAT SADAT'S CONDMNATION OF THE ACTION IS MERELY LIP SERVICE AND HE MUST BE PLEASED AT THE DAMAGE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE PLO.

5. HOWEVER, LOOKING FARTHER AHEAD, WE PERCEIVE SOM CRACKS IN ISRAELI SOLIDARITY ABOUT THE ACTION. SOME, SUCH AS MK OLMERT, SAY THINGS WILL WORK OUT EVEN THOUGH NO ONGOING PLAN HAS YET BEEN ADOPTED. OTHERS ARE LESS SANGUINE AND ARE TROUBLED BY THE LACK OF PLANNING REGARDING THE POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC STEPS TO FOLLOW THE MILITARY ACTION. THE COALITION PARTIES, EVEN THE DMC, ARE IN FAVOR OF STAYING IN LEBANON AND SUPPORT BEGIN'S OPEN-ENDED PROMISE TO WITHDRAW WHEN AGREEMENT IS ACHIEVED WHICH WILL PREVENT THE RETURN OF THE PALESTINIANS. THE ALIGNMENT, WE ARE TOLD, IS SPLIT: MAPAM WANTS ISRAEL TO PULL OUT QUICKLY, WHILE THE LABOR PARTY SILENTLY SUPPORTS THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO STAY. LABOR IS SUGGESTING TO THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, THAT IT STRESS THE NECESSITY OF THE MEASURES WHICH MUST BE UNDERTAKEN FOR ISRAEL'S SECURITY, RATHER THAN ITS DETERMINATION TO REMAIN IN LEBANON FOR AN UNSPECIFIED TIME. IN GENERAL, IT CAN BE SAID THAT THE LEFT SIDE OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM IS WORRIED THAT BEGIN'S EFFORT TO WORK OUT AN AGREEMENT ON LEBANON, WHILE NECESSARY, MAY SIDETRACK THE EFFORTS TOWARD PEACE. VIETS

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